



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 06/2022)**

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): Statewide Fuels Reduction

DIST-CO-RTE: 08-RIV/SBd-VAR/VAR **PM/PM:** VAR/VAR

EA: 08-SWFR1/PN 0000000044 **Federal-Aid Project Number:** N/A

Project Description

The purpose of this project is to manage and reduce the amount of fire hazards that exist along state routes and highways that pose a threat to structures, the environment, and the traveling public in conjunction with keeping the road open. This work will be conducted in both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. All work will be conducted within State Right of Way.

Caltrans CEQA Determination (Check one)

- Not Applicable** – Caltrans is not the CEQA Lead Agency
- Not Applicable** – Caltrans has prepared an IS or EIR under CEQA

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:

- Exempt by Statute.** (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.)
- Categorically Exempt. Class 4(i).** (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
 - No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.
- Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Scott Quinnell	<i>Scott Quinnell</i>	7/12/2022
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager

Adrian Shum	<i>Adrian Shum</i>	7/13/2022
Print Name	Signature	Date



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Caltrans NEPA Determination (Check one)

Not Applicable

Caltrans has determined that this project has no significant impacts on the environment as defined by NEPA, and that there are no unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b). See SER Chapter 30 for unusual circumstances. As such, the project is categorically excluded from the requirements to prepare an EA or EIS under NEPA and is included under the following:

23 USC 326: Caltrans has been assigned, and hereby certifies that it has carried out the responsibility to make this determination pursuant to 23 USC 326 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated April 18, 2022, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

- 23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(Enter activity number)
23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)(Enter activity number)
Activity Enter activity number listed in Appendix A of the MOU between FHWA and Caltrans

23 USC 327: Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 USC 327. The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

N/A Print Name, N/A Signature, N/A Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

N/A Print Name, N/A Signature, N/A Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): N/A

Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: June 28, 2022

Briefly list environmental commitments on continuation sheet if needed (i.e., not necessary if included on an attached ECR). Reference additional information, as appropriate (e.g., additional studies and design conditions).



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Continuation sheet:

Continued from page 1

The purpose of this project is to manage and reduce the amount of fire hazards that exist along state routes and highways that pose a threat to structures, the environment, and the traveling public in conjunction with keeping the road open. This work will be conducted in both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. All work will be conducted within State Right of Way.

Riverside County locations and limits for this project occur on State Route 243 between PM 0 - 22 northbound (NB) and southbound (SB). The San Bernardino County locations and limits for this project are the following: State Route 18 (SR-18) between PM 8.2 - 17.7 eastbound (EB) and westbound (WB), SR-18 between PM 58.4 - 64.6 EB and WB, State Route 330 between PM 29.6 - 43.8 NB and SB, State Route 138 between PM 0 - 30.7 EB and WB, State Route 173 between PM 0 - 7.17 EB and WB.

As per the 2021-22 Detailed Fuel Reduction District Guidance for early-action Fuels Reduction Service Contracts document, along with the District 8 Fuel Reduction Management Plan, the project proposes to manage and reduce the amount of fire hazards that exist along state routes and highways that pose a threat to structures, the environment, and the traveling public in conjunction with keeping the road open. Brush and vegetation removal is limited to 10 feet from the edge of pavement. The selected areas were identified due to the fire danger present along these routes, and the lack of available maintenance recourses resulting in a challenge to keep up with the required mitigation efforts.

This project does not have an assigned project Expenditure Authorization. For tracking purposes in STEVE the project has been designated as **08-SWFR1**. The work is being captured under Department Head Quarters Overhead 0000000044, Phase N, reporting code WILDFIREFL, Sub Object 036. This project is funded by STATE only dollars. The following technical documentation was prepared in conjunction with determining and addressing applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation and compliance requirements:

AIR QUALITY

Per memorandum from Environmental Engineering dated **October 05, 2021**:

The project is exempt from all project-level conformity requirements (40 CFR 93.126 or 128) Project type from Table 2: Plantings, landscaping, etc., therefore an air quality report is not needed for this project.

NOISE QUALITY

Per memorandum from Environmental Engineering dated **October 11, 2021**:

This project falls under Type III project categories of 23CFR772.7 in the Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol dated April 2020. Per the Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol, "Type III projects do not require a noise analysis.", therefore, a noise study is not needed for this project.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Per the INITIAL SITE ASSESSMENT (ISA) CHECKLIST dated **October 6, 2021**:

The Initial Site Assessment (ISA) Checklist completed for this proposed project has determined, "There is a low risk of potential hazardous waste involvement" and "no soil disturbance is involved" based on work description.

EA:08-SWFR1/PN 0000000044

Federal-Aid Project Number:

N/A



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PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Per Email dated **July 6, 2022**:

“Due to the nature of project description, no paleontological studies will be required for this project.”

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Per the HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE REPORT (HRCR) dated **May 2, 2022**:

“Caltrans, in accordance with PRC 5024 MOU Stipulation VIII.C.5 has determined there are cultural resources within the PAL that were **previously determined not eligible** for inclusion in the NRHP and/or not eligible for registration as a CHL and those determinations remain valid.”

Pursuant to PRC 5024 MOU Stipulation IX.A.2, has determined a Finding of **No State-owned Historical Resources Affected** is appropriate for this undertaking because there are no State-owned historical resources within the PAL / the following State-owned historical resources will not be affected. The work proposed is limited to the underbrush clearing. This will have a minor and temporary effect to the setting of the road as up to 10 feet of underbrush will be removed. There will be no impact to any of the contributing features of this resource as part of this project and the resource will maintain its characteristics as a rural mountain highway. Due to the minor potential for impact and because no character defining features of the property will be impacted, a **no historic properties affected** finding is appropriate for this state-owned historical resource.

Measures to be included in the Environmental Commitments Record (ECR):

- **CUL-1:** If buried cultural resources are encountered during Project Activities, it is Caltrans policy that work stop within 60 feet of the area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find.
- **CUL-2:** In the event that human remains are found the county coroner shall be notified and ALL construction activities within 60 feet of the discovery shall stop. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) who will then notify the Most Likely Descendent (MLD). The person who discovered the remains will contact the District 8 Division of Environmental Planning; Andrew Walters, DEBC: (909) 260-5178 and Gary Jones, DNAC: (909) 261-8157. Further provisions of PRC 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Per the NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY-NO EFFECT MEMO dated **October 05, 2021**:

As stated in the No Effect Memo under **Effect Findings**, “Biological issues were identified. See issues and avoidance measures below; no permits required.” The project proposes to reduce the ignition sources along various routes by removing vegetation within State Right of Way. Caltrans determines that the project will have no effect on species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act, in accordance with Section 7 of the Act. This project is located outside of NOAA Fisheries jurisdiction; therefore, a NOAA Fisheries species list is not required, and no effects of NOAA Fisheries species is anticipated.

Measures to be included in the Environmental Commitments Record (ECR):

- **BIO-1:** If project activities cannot be avoided during the nesting period from March 15th through September 1st, nesting bird surveys will occur no more than three days prior to



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commencement of any work activity. If an active avian nest is located, a 300-foot buffer will be put in place until nesting has ceased or the young have fledged.

- **BIO-2:** No trimming of riparian vegetation, particularly plants that are stabilizing the bank of majority waterbodies.
- **BIO-3:** Maximum 30 feet of vegetation removal allowed from edge of pavement.
- **BIO-4:** No new roads will be established to access project locations.
- **BIO-5:** If applicable, Best Management Practices will be followed to minimize sediment and suspended solids from discharging from the project site and entering receiving waters.
- **BIO-6:** Equipment, vehicles, and materials will be staged and stored in previously disturbed areas only.

STORM WATER

Per Memorandum dated **November 3, 2021:**

The permit which regulates stormwater and non-stormwater discharges from Caltrans properties and facilities, and discharges associated with operations and maintenance of the statewide highway system is Order No. 2012-0011-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000003, NPDES Statewide Storm Water Permit for State of California, Department of Transportation.

NPDES requirements for the work identified in the Reduction Plan (within State right of way) shall comply with the latest edition of the Caltrans Maintenance Manual and the latest edition of the Caltrans Statewide Stormwater Management Plan. The nature of the proposed work, "Existing drainage flow patterns will not be altered, and No new impervious surfaces will be added." Also identified as NOT required for this project are the following: Encroachment Permit, A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) or Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP) and Notification to the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Per VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT(VIA) LEVEL QUESTIONNAIRE dated **February 8, 2022:**

A questionnaire to determine the VIA level was completed and resulted in a score of **13**, which is in the second lowest range level of impacts in the questionnaire. This score corresponds to the following statement, "Negligible visual changes to the environment are proposed. A brief memorandum addressing visual issues providing a rationale why a technical study is not required."

Per District Landscape Architecture Memorandum dated **February 8, 2022:**

"Detailed evaluation was given to the project sites, as most of the areas are listed as "Eligible" or "Officially Designated" on the State Highway Scenic System and identified in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. An assessment of the visual quality of the project areas determined that the visual character of the proposed fuel reduction will be compatible with the existing visual character of the corridors." Further discussed, "While the section of the proposed fuel reduction on SR-243 is Officially Designated on the State Scenic Highway list, change to the visual resource will be low. The proposed fuel reduction is not proposing any changes that will alter the surrounding visual characteristics of the route. This review indicates that the proposed fuel reduction would not adversely affect any "Officially Designated Scenic Resource" as defined by CEQA statues or guidelines, by Caltrans policy."



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PERMITS

Per the NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY-NO EFFECT MEMO dated **October 05, 2021**:

No Permits are required for this project.

In conjunction with the results of the above technical documentation, the Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures included in the initial and revised Environmental Commitment Record (ECR) prepared for this project, will be implemented during the construction of this project. If it is determined that revisions to the ECR are required during performance of project, the ECR will be updated accordingly.

Changes to the project description, scope of work, limits, construction strategy and/or staging and storage requirements, will require that the District's Division of Environmental Planning be notified in a timely manner, to determine if an Environmental Re-Evaluation (and/or updates to the Technical Studies performed) is required.